

Report on Australasian Championships planned for 11th – 12th February 2017 at Waikaia.

Vetters' report by Pete Squires, 11th April 2016.

Thanks to Bob Cunninghame and his knowledge of landowners and country, we have access to a magnificent bit of rogain territory just north of Waikaia in Southland. The land includes some pockets of native beech forest, some high tussock grasslands, and a large area of rolling hill country, mostly developed but with plenty of challenges.

Our planner Stu Payne has made an outstanding job of exploring all the intricacies and subtleties of the varied countryside, and has come up with a course which offers a great variety of route and terrain choices.

In February this year, Richard Robinson and myself vetted the course and placed permanent confluence markers on 92 checkpoint locations. We were immediately impressed with the beauty and variety of the area, and the effort which Stu has put in to finding unusual locations which are not at all obvious from the map. He must have run for miles!

There is the usual hill-climbing which we expect in NZ but many of the climbs, although sustained, are not steep. Altitude on most of the course ranges from 190 metres to 700 metres, but there are some places closer to 900 metres. There is a range of farm tracks which will help speed, but the checkpoints are so well arranged that you will be off-track for most of the time. The lower country is mostly grassed but with pockets of scrub and native bush, and streams which can be open but often have scrub. The higher country is less developed and has a cover which includes open tussock and some small scrub patches. This will make a slower running speed but does not affect walking speed.

In the north, the map includes a sizeable area of DOC managed beech forest, which is open in most places except where there is windfall. The Waikaia River in this area is quite beautiful – it is famous for trout fishing. The bush gives way to tussock in the tops.

The whole area is on one single farm – Glenaray Station. In fact, this station is so large that we are using less than a quarter of it. Much of it further north is really high, rugged, untracked and wild. You may see feral deer in the tussock areas.

Southland is famous for its farming. This means good soils and good rainfall. It can also be hot - we had three days when the temperature was between 34 and 36 for most of the day. You will doubtless see many sheep. The farm is large, productive, and well managed. One morning I had to wait for five mobs of sheep to pass me. It took over 70 minutes!

Stu, Richard, and I all agree that we do not think anyone can clear the course, so there will be an emphasis on your planning ability. Overall, we think that this is beautiful and varied country and it promises to be a very enjoyable rogain indeed.